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Security Strategy for the 1990s

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Following is an address by President Bush at the Coast Guard Academy graduation ceremony, New London, Connecticut, May 24, 1989.

Today, our world—your world—is changing, East and West. And today, I want to speak to you about the world we want to see, and what we can do to bring that new world into clear focus.

We live in a time when we are witnessing the end of an idea—the final chapter of the communist experiment. Communism is now recognized—even by many within the communist world itself—as a failed system, one that promised economic prosperity but failed to deliver the goods, a system that built a wall between the people and their political aspirations.

But the eclipse of communism is only one-half of the story of our time. The other is the ascendancy of the democratic idea. Never before has the idea of freedom so captured the imaginations of men and women the world over. And never before has the hope of freedom beckoned so many—trade unionists in Warsaw, the people of Panama, rulers consulting the ruled in the Soviet Union. And even as we speak today, the world is transfixed by the dramatic events in Tiananmen Square [Beijing, China]. Everywhere those voices are speaking the language of democracy and freedom, and we hear them and the world hears them, and America will do all it can do to encourage them.

So today I want to speak about our security strategy for the 1990s—one that advances American ideals and upholds American aims.

Risks and Opportunities of New Challenges

Amidst the many challenges we'll face, there will be risks. But let me assure you, we'll find more than our share of opportunities. We and our allies are strong—stronger really than at any point in the postwar period, and more capable than ever of supporting the cause of freedom. There's an opportunity before us to shape a new world.

What is it that we want to see? It is a growing community of democracies anchoring international peace and stability, and a dynamic free-market system generating prosperity and progress on a global scale. The economic foundation of this new era is the proven success of the free market—and nurturing that foundation are the values rooted in freedom and democracy.

Our country, America, was founded on these values, and they gave us the confidence that flows from strength. So let's be clear about one thing: America looks forward to the challenge of an emerging global market. But these values are not ours alone; they are now shared by our friends and allies around the globe.

The economic rise of Europe and the nations of the Pacific rim is the growing success of our postwar policy. This time is a time of tremendous opportunity, and destiny is in our own hands. To reach the world we want to see, we've got to work and work hard. There's a lot of work ahead of us.

We must resolve international trade problems that threaten to pit friends and allies against one another. We must combat misguided notions of economic nationalism that will tell us to close off our economies to foreign competition—just when the global marketplace has become a fact of life. We must open the door to the nations of Eastern Europe and other socialist countries that embrace free-market reforms.

And finally, for developing nations heavily burdened with debt, we must provide assistance and encourage the market reforms that will set those nations on a path toward growth. If we succeed, the next decade and the century beyond will be an era of unparalleled growth—an era which sees the flourishing of freedom, peace, and prosperity around the world.

But this new era cannot unfold in a climate where conflict and turmoil exist. And, therefore, our goals must also include security and stability: security for ourselves and our allies and our friends, stability in the international arena, and an end to regional conflicts.

Such goals are constant, but the strategy we employ to reach them can, and must, change as the world changes. Today, the need for a dynamic and

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adaptable strategy is imperative. We must be strong—economically, diplomatically, and, as you know, militarily—to take advantage of the opportunities open to us in a world of rapid change. And nowhere will the ultimate consequences of change have more significance for world security than within the Soviet Union itself.

Soviet Union

What we're seeing now in the Soviet Union is, indeed, dramatic. The process is still ongoing, unfinished. But make no mistake, our policy is to seize every, and I mean every, opportunity to build a better, more stable relationship with the Soviet Union—just as it is our policy to defend American interests in light of the enduring reality of Soviet military power.

We want to see *perestroika* succeed. And we want to see the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*—so far, a revolution imposed from top down—institutionalized within the Soviet Union. And we want to see *perestroika* extended as well. We want to see a Soviet Union that restructures its relationship toward the rest of the world—a Soviet Union that is a force for constructive solutions to the world's problems.

The grand strategy of the West during the postwar period has been based on the concept of containment: checking the Soviet Union's expansionist aims, in the hope that the Soviet system itself would one day be forced to confront its internal contradictions. The ferment in the Soviet Union today affirms the wisdom of this strategy. And now we have a precious opportunity to move beyond containment. You're graduating into an exciting world, where the opportunity for peace—world peace, lasting peace—has never been better.

Our goal—integrating the Soviet Union into the community of nations—is every bit as ambitious as containment was at its time. And it holds tremendous promise for international stability.

Other Regional Powers

Coping with a changing Soviet Union will be a challenge of the highest order. But the security challenges we face today do not come from the East alone. The emergence of regional powers is rapidly changing the strategic landscape.

In the Middle East, in South Asia, in our own hemisphere, a growing number of nations are acquiring advanced and highly destructive capabilities—in some cases, weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. And it is an unfortunate fact that the world faces increasing threat from armed insurgencies, terrorists, and as you in the Coast Guard are well aware, narcotics traffickers—and, in some regions, an unholy alliance of all three.

Our task is clear: we must curb the proliferation of advanced weaponry; we must check the aggressive ambitions of renegade regimes; and we must enhance the ability of our friends to defend themselves. We have not yet mastered the complex challenge. We and our allies must construct a common strategy for stability in the developing world.

Defense Strategy

How we and our allies deal with these diverse challenges depends on how well we understand the key elements of defense strategy. And so let me just mention today two points in particular.

First, the need for an effective deterrent, one that demonstrates to our allies and adversaries alike American strength, American resolve; and

Second, the need to maintain an approach to arms reduction that promotes stability at the lowest feasible level of armaments.

Deterrence is central to our defense strategy. The key to keeping the peace is convincing our adversaries that the cost of aggression against us or our allies is simply unacceptable.

In today's world, nuclear forces are essential to deterrence. Our challenge is to protect those deterrent systems from attack. And that's why we'll move Peacekeeper ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] out of fixed and vulnerable silos—making them mobile and thus harder to target. Looking to the longer term, we will also develop and deploy a new highly mobile single-warhead missile, the Midgetman. With only minutes of warning, these new missiles can relocate out of harm's way. Any attack against systems like this will fail.

We are also researching—and we are committed to deploy when ready—a more comprehensive defensive system, known as SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative]. Our premise is straightforward: defense against incoming missiles endangers no person, endangers no country.

We're also working to reduce the threat we face, both nuclear and conventional. The INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty demonstrates that willingness. In addition, in the past decade, NATO has unilaterally removed 2,400 shorter range theater warheads. But theater nuclear forces contribute to stability, no less than strategic forces, and thus, it would be irresponsible to depend solely on strategic nuclear forces to deter conflict in Europe.

Conventional Balance in Europe

The conventional balance in Europe is just as important and is linked to the nuclear balance. For more than 40 years—and look at your history books to see how pronounced this accomplishment is—the Warsaw Pact's massive advantage in conventional forces has cast a shadow over Europe.

The unilateral reductions that President Gorbachev has promised give us hope that we can now redress that imbalance. We welcome those steps because, if implemented, they will help reduce the threat of surprise attack. And they confirm what we've said all along: that Soviet military power far exceeds the levels needed to defend the legitimate security interests of the U.S.S.R. And we must keep in mind that these reductions alone—even if implemented—are not enough to eliminate the significant numerical superiority that the Soviet Union enjoys right now.

Through negotiations, we can now transform the military landscape of Europe. The issues are complex, stakes are very high. But the Soviets are now being forthcoming, and we hope to achieve the reductions we seek.

Let me emphasize—our aim is nothing less than removing war as an option in Europe.

The U.S.S.R. has said that it is willing to abandon its age-old reliance on offensive strategy. It's time to begin. This should mean a smaller force—one less reliant on tanks and artillery and personnel carriers that provide the Soviets' offensive striking power. A restructured Warsaw Pact—one that mirrors the defensive posture of NATO—would make Europe and the world more secure.

Peace can also be enhanced by movement toward more openness in military activities. And 2 weeks ago, I proposed an "open skies" initiative, to extend the concept of openness. That plan for territorial overflights would

increase our mutual security against sudden and threatening military activities. In the same spirit, let us extend this openness to military expenditures as well. I call on the Soviets to do as we have always done. Let's open the ledgers, publish an accurate defense budget.

But as we move forward we must be realistic. Transformations of this magnitude will not happen overnight. If we are to reach our goals, a great deal is required of us, our allies, and of the Soviet Union. But we can succeed.

Preserving Democracy

I began today by speaking about the triumph of a particular, peculiar, very special American ideal—freedom. And I know there are those who may think there's something presumptuous about that claim—those who will think it's boastful. But it is not, for one simple reason: Democracy isn't our creation, it is our inheritance.

And we can't take credit for democracy, but we can take that precious gift of freedom, preserve it, and pass it on—as my generation does to you, and you, too, will do one day. And perhaps—provided we seize the opportunities open to us—we can help others attain the freedom that we cherish.

As I said on the Capitol steps the day I took this office, as President of the United States, "There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people." As your Commander in Chief, let me call on this Coast Guard class to reaffirm with me that American power will continue in its service to the enduring ideals of democracy and freedom. ■

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